

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:  
ARMED SERVICES  
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
INTELLIGENCE  
JOINT ECONOMIC

April 7, 2017

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to urge you and your Administration to present a long-term strategy for Syria and to request the appropriate Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) from Congress.

Regardless of who is President, or which party occupies the White House, I believe that we have a moral obligation to act when a regime violates international law and gasses its own people with impunity. Bashar al-Assad is a dictator who has shown a willingness to reduce residential neighborhoods to rubble, to imprison and torture children, and who has watched callously as his actions have killed hundreds of thousands civilians and displaced millions of Syrian refugees. Last night, our brave men and women in uniform sent an important message to the world that the United States will not stand by when chemical weapons kill dozens of innocent people, including children. I believe our military response on the evening of April 6, 2017, against the Syrian airfield where the chemical weapon attack originated was direct, targeted, and proportional.

The situation in Syria, however, is incredibly complex, and we must have a long-term strategy. If you and your Administration decide to take additional military action, there could be serious and far-reaching consequences, and "mission creep" will become a very real and dangerous possibility. I remain adamantly opposed to the introduction of significant ground troops in Syria and believe that we cannot and should not become directly entangled in a civil war in the Middle East.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I have long believed it is past time for Congress to reassert its constitutional authority by passing a new and narrower authorization of use of military force. For years, the executive branch, Presidents of both political parties, have relied on broad interpretations of the AUMF that was passed after 9/11 to combat new threats anywhere around the world.

The use of military force is never a light decision, and even though Thursday night's strikes may be narrow, limited, and were in direct response to a heinous chemical attack against civilians, congressional approval is required. Furthermore, last night's attack serves as another reminder of why your Administration should submit a new AUMF and Congress should fulfill its responsibility by replacing the decade-and-a-half-old AUMF with a more limited and up-to-date authorization.

Military action should not be initiated without a clear set of objectives and a complete understanding of how and under what circumstances our military operations end. Endless wars can be avoided if we understand what our metric of success is before the fight starts. The costs of war are not borne by policymakers, but by the men and women who comprise our all-volunteer military force and their families.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Martin Heinrich', is written over a horizontal line.

MARTIN HEINRICH  
U.S. Senator